CFC Keyworker Inspires Coworkers
CFC Story of the Week -- Week 7

After surviving prostate cancer with the help of a CFC charity, Donald Thompson encourages others to support the CFC and get the facts on cancer from the National Cancer Institute.

Donald Thompson hadn't a clue what he was getting into when he agreed to be a keyworker for the NIH Combined Federal Campaign. "I was the new kid on the block," he says. "I just arrived here June third." Thompson was still getting used to his job as a program assistant in the Neural Environment Cluster at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

"Donald, you'll be perfect," said his Administrative Team Leader, Dr. Ursula Utz. She told him how approachable he is and how much he makes people smile and laugh. However, Utz didn't know how personal experiences with CFC charities would make him a great keyworker.

Thompson's experiences began when he volunteered to help those struggling with alcoholism and substance abuse. For thirty years, he had been burdened by a family secret: "My mother passed when I was only 15 . . . with a bottle of alcohol beside her bed." While his father worked, Thompson became a principle caregiver for his four younger sisters and even his older brother. In 1989 -- by helping others -- Thompson finally found some release from the regret and sadness he still felt. Since then, he has been a volunteer with Montgomery General Hospital, working with patients in its detoxification program. "I enjoy my life now," he says, "doing whatever I can for people."

Thompson also stepped forward when the Intercity AIDS Network in Washington, D.C., needed volunteers to educate the community about HIV/AIDS and substance abuse. His spirited efforts led to a job as an administrative assistant for a company under contract to the National Institute on Drug Abuse to train substance abuse and HIV/AIDS educators. In his spare time, he also volunteered for the Whitman-Walker Clinic and Us Helping Us, which assist those dealing with HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and other health concerns.

Last month, Thompson sat at his computer to send his first CFC e-mail to his coworkers. "Things started to flow," he says, and he soon described how -- after years of supporting charities -- he recently needed one himself: "Food and Friends delivered hot meals to me on a daily basis while I was recovering from prostate cancer just one year ago. As a grateful cancer survivor and free of the disease now . . . I do what I can to help."

"I couldn't believe I wrote that." Thompson paused at his computer, knowing the risks of revealing such personal information. But then, knowing how real the need is, he clicked the send button. "I can't change the world," he explains, "but I can share my experience and hope."

Thompson was touched by the support that followed. The first person to read his e-mail gave him a big hug. The rest of his coworkers also responded enthusiastically -- 75 percent of them have made CFC pledges. "It overwhelmed me," says Retha Anderson, the CFC coordinator at

NINDS, speaking about Thompson's CFC appeal. She now frequently discusses the campaign with him and considers him a friend.

Thompson couldn't be happier. "I love people and I can't live in this world without them," he says. "And you know Barbra Streisand said it very well 'People who need people are the luckiest people in the world.'"

Coworkers Maria Garcia (l) and Toya Rogers rally around Donald Thompson.

Thompson with his institute's CFC Coordinator, Retha Anderson, who was so moved by his story she helped it become a CFC Story of the Week

CFC Stories of the Week

Each week of the campaign, we will share a story that shows you how your CFC contribution can touch the lives of people you care about. We will mention a few charities along the way, but there are 3,000 charities in the CFC Catalog of Caring. More than one of them can help you make a difference to the people and causes you believe in. **We encourage you to consider all the possibilities.**

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